



LETTER FROM THE STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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This wallet card provides basic information to help you learn how *you* can protect yourself during a public health emergency. It includes a section for you to fill in your family's personal health and emergency information. Please review this card and prepare your family. *Together*, we protect Virginia's health – not just in times of emergency, but every day.

A NEW POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY: BIOTERRORISM

Public health emergencies include *naturally occurring* diseases, such as outbreaks of measles or meningitis. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, can also impact the health of citizens. In addition, public health emergencies can include an *intentional release* of chemical, biological, or radiological agents that can cause illness or death, generally referred to as bioterrorism. Exposure to any of these agents usually requires prompt medical attention.

The following chart includes examples of some of the illnesses that could be caused intentionally and the immediate actions to take. It is important to remember that chemical, biological, and radiological agents are all very different from each other and have distinct symptoms and treatments.

For a more complete list of potential illnesses, symptoms, and treatments, go to www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on the orange button.

EXAMPLES OF DISEASES AND EXPOSURES POTENTIALLY ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORISM

Disease/ Exposure	Description	Symptoms	First Actions	Medical Response
Anthrax	Skin, respiratory, or intestinal infection that is caused by a bacterium. Symptoms occur within 1-7 days of exposure.	Skin – lesion(s) with black centers Respiratory – flu-like symptoms that progress to severe breathing problems Intestinal – nausea and then abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting of blood.	Contact your health care provider if you have been exposed or think you have been exposed. Spread of anthrax from one person to another is extremely rare.	Antibiotics
Smallpox	Severe illness with rash caused by a virus. Illness occurs within 7-17 days of exposure. Smallpox disease has been eliminated due to vaccines. The last natural case in the world occurred in 1977.	High fever and aches followed by a rash that first looks like raised bumps and rapidly covers the body.	Contact your health care provider if you have symptoms. Isolate yourself from others unless told otherwise by a health care provider because it is spread from person to person.	Isolation and supportive care for those already ill; vaccination within 3 days of exposure prevents infection or reduces severity of illness. Close contacts of those ill may be vaccinated and asked to stay home.
Botulism	A muscle-paralyzing disease caused by exposure to a bacterial toxin.	Blurred/double vision, dry mouth, muscle paralysis that may affect breathing. Can enter the body through the mouth, lungs, or open wounds.	Seek medical care immediately if you have symptoms. Not spread from person to person.	Antitoxin may reduce the severity of the disease if it is administered early. Supportive care, such as a ventilator, may also be required in some cases.
Sarin	Nerve agent that is a colorless liquid, but evaporates quickly into vapor.	Low levels of exposure can cause coughing, confusion, nausea, blurred vision, and other symptoms. High levels of exposure can result in paralysis, convulsions, or death.	Leave area of exposure. If possible, quickly remove all clothing, place in plastic bag, and seal. Take a shower immediately. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.	Antidote can be given by injection.
Dirty Bomb	Explosive device which disperses low-level radioactive material. It does not cause a nuclear explosion.	Most immediate injuries will be caused by the explosion. It is unlikely that the radiation will be strong enough to cause radiation sickness, but contamination may result from radioactive material.	Leave area of explosion. As soon as possible, remove all clothing (including shoes and socks), place in plastic bag, and seal. Take a shower immediately. Seek medical attention as soon as possible.	Treatment for blast injuries. Some people may require decontamination due to the presence of radioactive material. Potassium iodine (KI) is not an effective treatment.

PLANNING AHEAD IS THE KEY TO BEING PREPARED FOR ANY EMERGENCY.

- +** Prepare a disaster supply kit that includes batteries, water, and non-perishable foods. Visit www.vaemergency.com for a list of items to have on hand.
- +** Talk with your family about different emergencies that could occur and health issues that could arise. Think about where family members might be during the day or evening and how you will contact each other in the event of an emergency.
- +** Create a family emergency health plan using this information, keep it handy, and review it early and often. Use the following sections to get started, filling in the information for each family member in the spaces provided.

PERSONAL HEALTH AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Contact	Name/Phone Number
Local public health department (Go to www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/LocalHealthDistricts.asp)	
Personal emergency contacts (local)	
Personal emergency contacts (out of town)	
Hospitals near:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Work + School + Home 	
Family physicians	
Employer information, phone number	School phone numbers

Family Member	Blood Type	Allergies	Past/Current Medical Conditions	Current Medications
Example: Linda (mother)	A-	Penicillin	High blood pressure	Hydrochlorothiazide

MASS IMMUNIZATIONS OR MEDICATIONS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY DURING AN EMERGENCY

If mass immunizations or medications are needed for a community, your local health department may set up a dispensing site(s) to give vaccines, antibiotics, or antidotes. Listen to news reports and follow instructions from officials about who should go to the sites and where they are located.

If you are directed to a dispensing site, you will need to bring important information with you to help ensure that you receive appropriate treatment. This information should

be collected and stored, in advance, in one convenient place for all family members to grab and go at a moment's notice. Bring the following for EACH family member:

- +** Picture ID such as a driver's license, military ID, or company badge.
- +** Medical records including immunization history, current medications, and allergies.
- +** Current age and weight of children.

If all items are not available, bring as much information with you as you can. You should be prepared to answer questions about your general medical history.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
(888) 246-2675 (English)
(888) 246-2857 (Español)
(866) 874-2646 (TTY)

Poison Control Center
(800) 222-1222